

# NORTHWEST INTER-NATION FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

## CLIENT COMPLAINT PROCESS:



## MISSION STATEMENT

To provide community based and community driven child and family care services that protect and preserve the unique cultural identity of every child and family in the bands we serve.

### **Informal Client Complaint Process**

A client's complaint process is a process that allows the client to appeal (disagree) with a decision made by the social worker. NIFCS believes in **listening** to and **responding** to the clients' complaint. When a client is unsatisfied with a decision made by a social worker, this appeals process allows for the opportunity to reconsider decisions and to continue to focus on the best practice service delivery to clients.

When dealing with complaints informally, usually resolve complaints effectively. However, if this informal complaint process does not resolve your concerns at the informal level, the complainant is given the option of making a formal complaint.

This pamphlet has been developed to assist you with this process. The following are the principles that guide this process:

#### **Principles:**

**Child centered:** the best interest of the child shall guide the complaint process.

**Accountability:** The complaint process is an integral part of overall quality assurance. NIFCS has a responsibility to work effectively with children and to support families. From a professional and ethical point of view, NIFCS accepts and recognizes the need for the benefit of accountability to the individual and to the public.

**Fairness:** NIFCS staff is trained to incorporate the concept of fairness and due process to assist clients.

**Openness:** NIFCS staff recognizes the need to re-examine decisions and to support a review, if concerns are expressed.

**Right to Advocacy and Support:** clients have the right to be assisted by an advocate at all stages of the complaints' process.

**Safety:** everyone has the right to complaints' process in a non-threatening environment. NIFCS aspires to create an environment that allows for a complaint process in a non-threatening way.

**Local Resolution Preferred:** complainants are encouraged to allow to resolve complaints locally before proceeding to a formal stage.

**Timelines:** all complaints will be dealt with in a timely manner. NIFCS allows 30 days to respond to a complaint from the time the complaint is made to its resolution.

**Responsive to Aboriginal Community:** The complaint process must be sensitive and respectful of the aboriginal culture and traditions of those receiving service. First Nation communities and families should be involved wherever possible.

#### **Process:**

- 1) Upon receipt of a phone call, visit or written complaint or concern to an office, the complaint will be managed using the problem-solving approach where the client must first speak and meet with the case social worker, from which the conflict arose.
- 2) If after discussing the clients concerns, the client and the social worker are still in disagreement, the social worker's supervisor will participate in further discussion of the problem
- 3) If agreement still cannot be reached, the social worker's supervisor may request in writing that NIFCS Executive Director participate in the resolution of the complaint.
- 4) If the matter has been heard at all levels and is still not satisfactorily resolved and is not within the jurisdiction of the courts, the Executive of the Board of Directors is the fourth and final level of appeal. The complaint is always directed in writing, clearly stating the problem or conflict.
- 5) If a formal complaint is requested, the following steps are taken:

### **Formal Complaint Process:**

The formal complaints' process begins when a complainant indicates that they are making a formal complaint.

The complaint may be made in writing, verbally or by any other means, such as using an alternate communication device or using the assistance of an interpreter. The complainant will be given every assistance possible to facilitate making the complaint.

A staff member receiving a complaint will ensure:

- 1) the complaint is documented immediately,
- 2) the complaint is given to the designated staff person,
- 3) the complainant is informed of the name and contact information of the regional manager responsible for complaints,
- 4) the regional manager responsible for complaints is notified.

### **External Review Process**

A complainant, who disagrees with the MCFD regional managers findings from the formal complaint resolution process, may ask for a further review by one of the following, according to the program area involved.

- Children's Commission
- Child & Youth Advocate
- Deputy Minister, Ministry for Children and Families
- Band / Nation representative.

When the manager is notified by an external review authority that there is an appeal of a decision, the manager will:

- Cooperate with and offer assistance to the external review authority as requested
  - Notify the Division Head, Audit and Performance Management Division of the appeal.
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